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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
6 April 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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TOP SECRET

State Dept. review

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HIGHLIGHTS

The situation in Da Nang remained potentially explosive today, as Military Security Service chief Colonel Loan arrived to take command of progovernment marines and tanks. Deputy Premier Co was attempting to arrange a peace settlement within the city, but antigovernment forces were reported continuing to prepare for Da Nang's defense. In Saigon, Buddhist representatives boycotted a consultative session to prepare for a national political congress, and Buddhist students burned the offices of a newspaper critical of the demonstrations. Meanwhile, Communist propaganda is attempting to identify the aims of antigovernment urban groups with those of the Liberation Front.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US 25th Infantry Division forces have terminated Operation CIRCLE PINES after eight days in Hau Nghia Province (Para. 1). US Marines are continuing to press Operation ORANGE against Viet Cong troop concentrations and base complexes southwest of Da Nang (Para. 2). Operation DAN CHI 215 by six ARVN battalions and two river assault groups in Phong Dinh Province, 90 miles southwest of Saigon, has been terminated (Para. 3). USAF B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked Viet Cong political and military tactical command headquarters in Phuoc Tuy and Tay Ninh provinces (Para. 4). The operational status of South Vietnam's major highways and coastal railroad has been reported (Paras. 5-6). The weekly review of South Vietnam battle statistics has been received from MACV (Para. 7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Military Security Service chief Colonel Loan has been placed in charge of progovernment troops at Da Nang and has made conflicting remarks regarding possible moves against the city (Para. 1). In Da Nang,

[redacted]

Deputy Premier Co is attempting to reach a peaceful settlement which would include return of Vietnamese Marines to Saigon (Para. 2). Buddhist monk Tri Quang has claimed responsibility for the antigovernment movement in central South Vietnam (Para. 3).

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[redacted] A preparatory session today for a national political congress was boycotted by the Buddhists (Para. 5). The Buddhist Institute has been closed, as has been done in past political crises (Para. 6). Buddhist students burned a Saigon newspaper office, and Buddhists addressed a mass meeting today (Paras. 7-8).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Communist propaganda treatment of the antigovernment demonstrations in the South focuses on anti-Americanism and attempts to identify the objectives of the demonstrators with the objectives of the Front (Paras. 1-2). Hanoi-Peking relations remain close in the aftermath of Le Duan's participation in the Soviet party congress (Paras. 3-4).

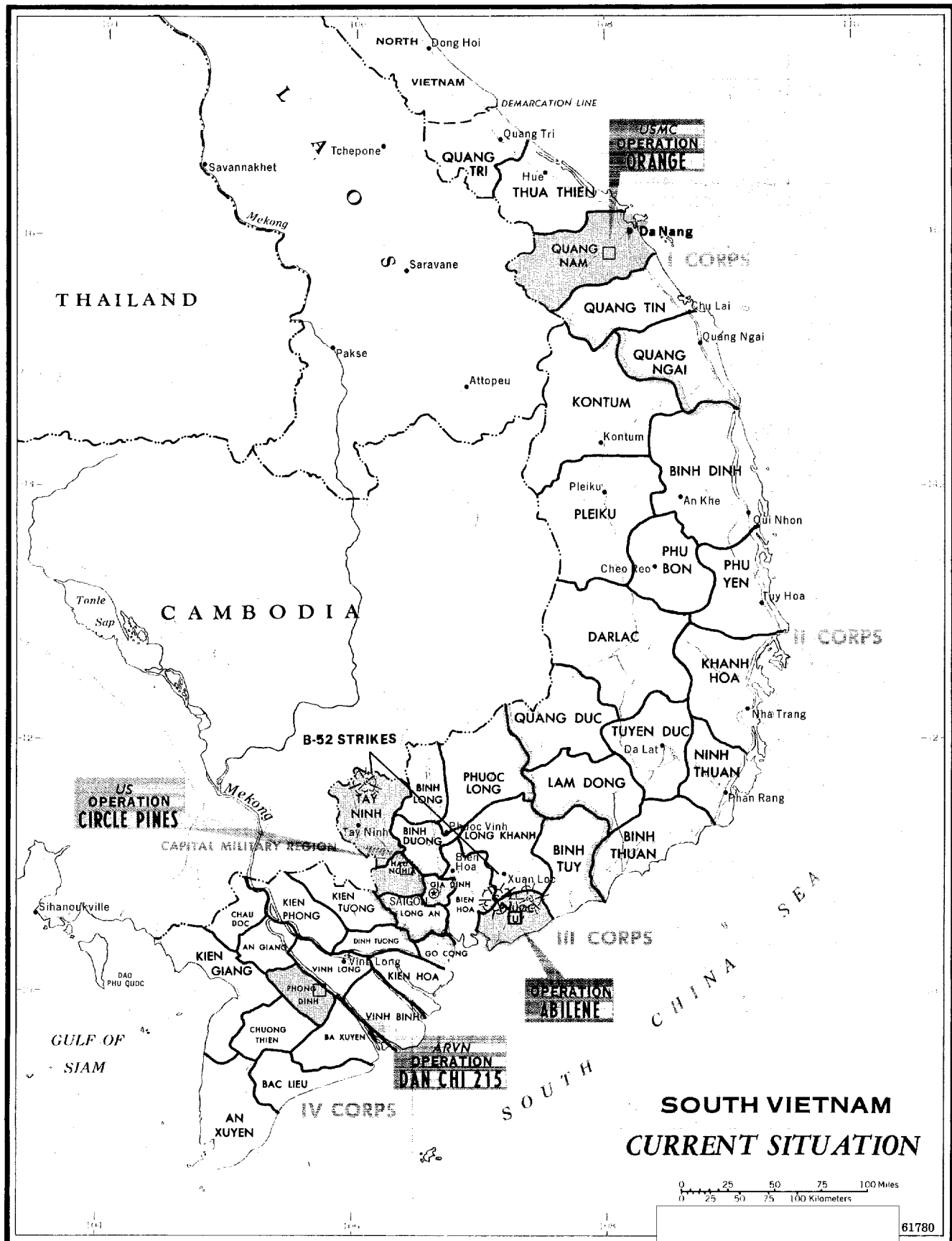
Correction: The first sentence, Paragraph 6, Section V of 5 April SitRep should read: The new economic plan does suggest that there will be an increase in outlays on defense.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Operation CIRCLE PINES, a two-battalion search-and-destroy ground sweep conducted by the 2d Brigade/US 25th Infantry Division in Hau Nghia Province during 28 March - 5 April, has been terminated. One hundred forty-nine Viet Cong were killed and five captured, in contrast to American casualties of 32 killed and 195 wounded. In addition, 14 US armored personnel carriers, 12 tanks, and two helicopters were damaged by enemy ground fire and mines during the course of the operation. The majority of the vehicles have been repaired and are presently serviceable.

2. Battalion-strength USMC task force elements conducting Operation ORANGE in Quang Nam Province yesterday uncovered a Viet Cong river harbor with extensive caves and fortifications 20 miles southwest of Da Nang. The Marine offensive, currently in its sixth day, has thus far resulted in 42 Viet Cong killed, 27 suspects detained, and substantial quantities of rice and corn seized. Seventeen Americans have been killed and 77 wounded.

3. Six ARVN infantry/ranger battalions and two Vietnamese river assault groups have terminated search-and-destroy/amphibious assault Operation DAN CHI 215 after three days in the delta province of Phong Dinh. Initial estimates of Viet Cong losses have been revised downward, with final results officially placed at 32 killed, three captured, and 38 weapons seized. Government casualties totaled 19 wounded.

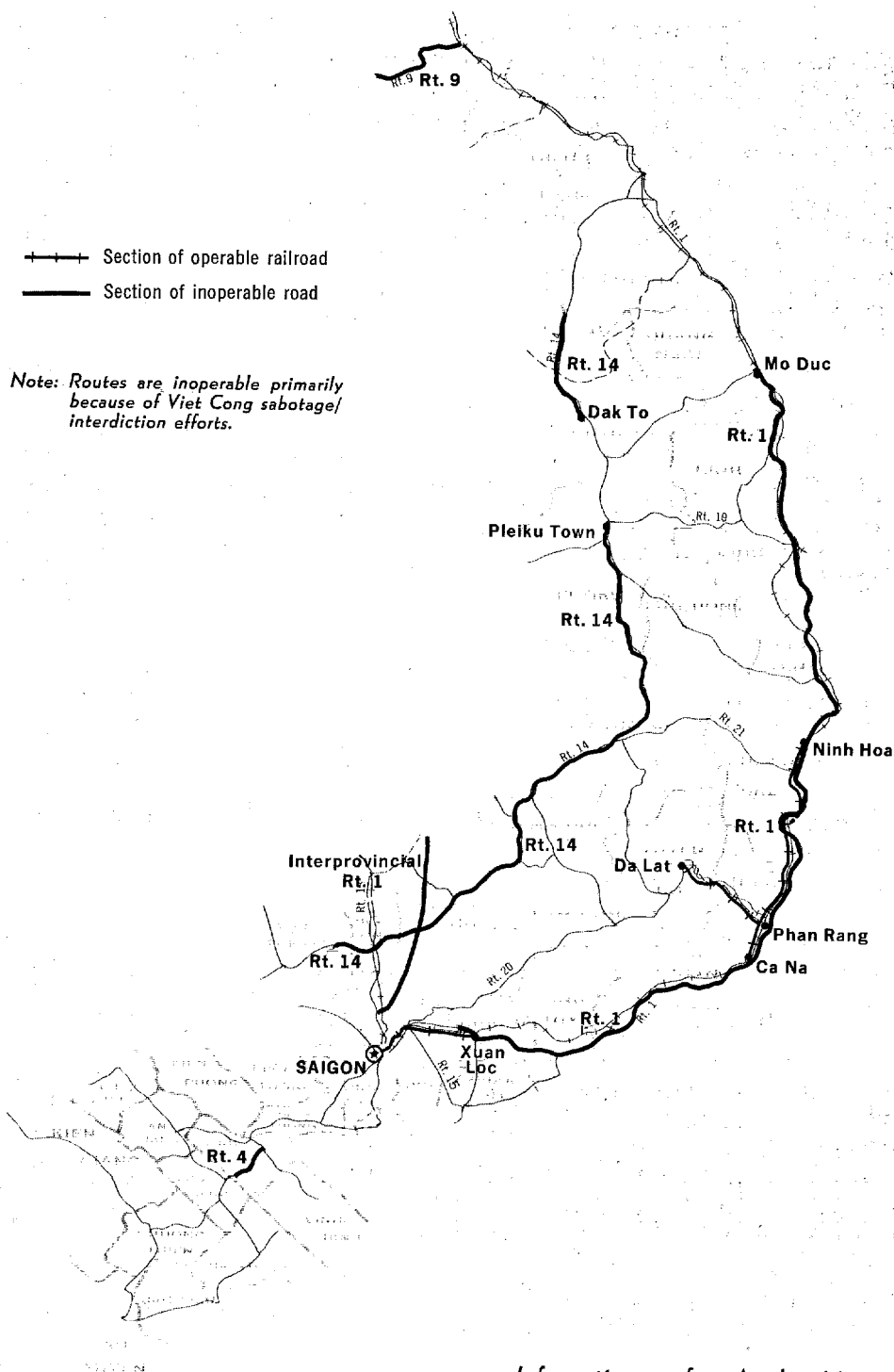
4. Twelve USAF B-52 Stratofortresses yesterday attacked two adjacent Viet Cong target complexes in Phuoc Tuy Province, 48 miles east-southeast of Saigon. The strike zones were reported to contain a Viet Cong tactical command headquarters, including combat forces and supporting agencies. The mission was flown in direct support of US 1st Infantry Division Operation ABILENE, participating elements of which will conduct poststrike ground exploitation of the target objective. In Tay Ninh Province, three additional B-52s last night bombed a Viet Cong politico-military headquarters complex 72 miles northwest of Saigon and four miles from the Cambodian border. Ground follow-up operations were not scheduled for this strike.

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CURRENT OPERATIONAL STATUS OF MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND COASTAL RAILROAD



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Operational Status of Major Surface Lines of Communication

5. The operational status of South Vietnam's major highways reflected no significant improvement during the period 26 March - 2 April. The opening of Route 7 in the Phu Yen - Phu Bon province border area of II Corps and Route 4 in the delta province of Ba Xuyen was somewhat offset by the closure of Route 4 in Vinh Long Province, also in the delta. The nation's coastal railroad declined in terms of operational capability, with the re-closure of its northern terminus from Da Nang to Hue.

WEEKLY REVIEW OF SOUTH VIETNAM BATTLE STATISTICS

6. This week (26 Mar - 2 Apr) as compared with last week (19-26 Mar)

I. Viet Cong Incidents

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>At-tacks</u>	<u>Regimental-size</u>	<u>Battalion-size</u>	<u>Company-size</u>	<u>Ter-rorism</u>
19 - 26 Mar	15	0	3	4	671
26 Mar - 2 Apr	8	0	1	1	651

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Sabotage</u>	<u>Propaganda</u>	<u>Anti-Aircraft</u>	<u>Total Incidents</u>
19 - 26 Mar	57	61	260	1,064
26 Mar - 2 Apr	48	43	155	905

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II. Casualties

	<u>VC/PAVN</u>		<u>GVN</u>	
	<u>19-26 Mar</u>	<u>26 Mar-2 Apr</u>	<u>19-26 Mar</u>	<u>26 Mar-2 Apr</u>
Killed	1,988	962	318	155
Wounded	-----	---	620	337
Missing/Captured	<u>249</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>26</u>
TOTALS	2,237	1,035	996	518

	<u>US</u>		<u>FREE WORLD</u>	
	<u>19-26 Mar</u>	<u>26 Mar-2 Apr</u>	<u>19-26 Mar</u>	<u>26 Mar-2 Apr</u>
Killed	121	101	28	18
Wounded	600	690	58	51
Missing/Captured	<u>5</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS	726	803	86	69

III. Weapons

	<u>VC/PAVN</u>		<u>GVN</u>	
	<u>19-26 Mar</u>	<u>26 Mar-2 Apr</u>	<u>19-26 Mar</u>	<u>26 Mar-2 Apr</u>
Individual	390	247	276	102
Crew-served	<u>33</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
TOTALS	423	255	280	104

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Military Security Service chief Colonel Loan--earlier reported to have been given command of the Vietnamese Marine battalions and tanks at Da Nang--has now arrived at the air base from Saigon. The situation at Da Nang remains potentially explosive, with progovernment and antigovernment military forces still opposing each other there. Colonel Loan has alternately told US observers that he may move troops quickly into the city and that he may wait two or three days.

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2. Meanwhile, in the city of Da Nang, Deputy Premier Co appears to be working somewhat at cross purposes by attempting to arrange a peaceful settlement which would include the return to Saigon of government marines now at the air base. Some Vietnamese Government officials, including Colonel Loan, feel Co may be acting under pressure from antigovernment forces.

3. Buddhist monk Tri Quang told an American observer today that he was responsible for the entire antigovernment movement in central South Vietnam. He said that the Buddhist purpose had not been to overthrow the government in Saigon, but to "reinforce it" by establishing democratic institutions to give it a legal base and popular support. Quang indicated that the Buddhists desired a constituent council drawn entirely from the present provincial and city councils, or, preferably, a council to be elected within three months. He argued that, if provincial elections could be held last spring, they were certainly possible this year with the military situation improved.

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5. A consultative session to prepare for a national political congress was convened by the military government in Saigon today, and was attended by some 30 political and religious figures. However, Buddhist representatives boycotted the meeting. [redacted] the consensus of the meeting was that the national political congress should meet next week and agree to the immediate establishment of a constituent assembly, half the members of which would be appointed and the other half drawn from the municipal and provincial councils. This arrangement has been proposed by the government previously but has not satisfied the Buddhist leadership. In a speech last night, Buddhist Institute Chairman Tam Chau referred to the plan for a national political congress as a retreat by the government from earlier promises for a constituent assembly.

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6. A Buddhist communiqué signed by Tam Chau and issued this morning announced the closing of the Buddhist Institute for administrative reasons. In past political crises, the institute has been closed to remove it as a target for anti-Buddhist acts, and, at the same time, to allow the institute leadership to avoid charges of direct involvement in Buddhist street demonstrations.

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7. The US Embassy has confirmed the burning of a Vietnamese newspaper office this evening by Buddhist students in Saigon, and noted that the paper had been critical of demonstrations. Press reports indicate that bands of demonstrators were still in the streets at 11 p.m., Saigon time and, as for the past two nights, police were using tear gas and other riot control measures.

8. Elsewhere, US Embassy officials in Hue have reported that a public meeting of some 8,000 persons was held this morning. Buddhist representatives called for the dissolution of the military Directorate and for a change in the US policy of support for Premier Ky. There were no uniformed military personnel present at the meeting. According to official reports, the evacuation of US civilians from the Hue area continued today. However, 1st Division commander General Nhuan has assured US officials there that they will receive his military protection and that his previous "differences" with the Saigon government had been resolved.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Communist propaganda is increasing its efforts to turn the present political unrest in South Vietnam into a movement directed chiefly against the Americans and allied with objectives of the NFLSV. In its second major broadcast in two days on this theme, the Liberation Press Agency on 6 April claimed that any struggle directed solely against the Saigon government--"the lackeys of the Americans"--would not root out the true cause of the political and social ills of South Vietnam. It recounted in bitter language the crimes of the Americans in Vietnam, called for increased action against the "US imperialists," and praised what it called the "legitimate struggle" of the urban people against the Americans. The broadcast claimed that the Front and the urban struggle movement had but a single objective and called for united action of all the antigovernment groups with the NFLSV "to oppose the Americans and their lackeys to achieve national independence, democracy, peace and neutrality in South Vietnam."

2. Hanoi propaganda has echoed the theme of an identity of purpose between the liberation forces and the present political movement in the cities. Articles in the party daily on 1 and 5 April claimed that the acute contradiction between the US and the aspirations of the South Vietnamese people was the cause of the present struggle.

Peking-Hanoi Relations

3. Both the Chinese and the Vietnamese are continuing to make an effort to demonstrate publicly that Sino-Vietnamese relations remain warm and friendly and that Vietnamese participation in the Soviet 23rd Party Congress in the face of the Chinese boycott does not foreshadow any major change in Chinese-DRV cooperation. On 31 March Hanoi dailies devoted a considerable amount of space to effusive comment about Chinese economic and social accomplishments. The major party daily, Nhan Dan, for example,

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said that the Chinese people under Mao's leadership had made "brilliant achievements on the economic front which have won the admiration of and brought elation to their friends all over the five continents."

4. In equally laudatory terms the North Vietnamese ambassador in Peking, attending a reception to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Sino-DRV civil air agreement on 5 April, thanked the Chinese for "tremendous and disinterested assistance" throughout the years. The Chinese spokesman in turn referred to the Vietnamese as "comrades in arms" and dragged out the old simile of the Chinese and Vietnamese being as close as "lips and teeth."

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